



Centering With Nine Breaths

There may be no such thing as a magic wand when working with anxiety or self-esteem. But this Centering Exercise is as close as I've found. I have used it with hundreds of clients and it almost always lowers anxiety and boosts self-esteem in a measurable way. It also serves as an easy introduction to meditation and mindfulness.

If I could give just one tool to each person I work with, this would be it.

How to Expand Your Centering Practice

1. Close your eyes, set both feet on the floor, and place your hand on your heart. Bring your awareness to your body. Notice the weight of your body on the couch cushions, the contact of your feet to the floor, notice the feel of your clothing against your skin, any sounds in the room.
2. In just a moment, we will take nine slow breaths: three breaths *counting*, three breaths using *affirmations* and *visualizations*, and three breaths stating *intentions*.
3. **Counting:** breathe in through your nose on a slow count of four, pause at the top of your breath for a count of two, breathe out through your mouth on a count of four, hold at the bottom for two beats. Do this three times, and pause.
4. **Affirmations:** with the same timing as above, take in a slow breath, visualize drawing healing golden Light into your body while holding the words *Loving Kindness* in your heart, as you release the breath, visualize filling the room around you with this Light while holding the word *Compassion* in your heart. Repeat for three breaths.
5. **Intentions:** Still using the same timing of long, slow breathing, at the top of your inhale say out loud, "I center myself within myself." Consciously move energy from your head to your heart. Another slow breath in and say, "I invoke my Inner Wisdom." Another deep breath in, "I ask for Spirit's assistance." Invite the Divine into your practice.
6. Pause for a moment before you open your eyes and notice any change in your energy.

You can very easily expand this exercise by adding more breaths; I regularly do three sets of ten breaths each. Mindfulness, being present in the moment, compassion, loving kindness all come easier with practice, but this is more than just a skill or technique. Through this practice, we can get out of our head, set aside our ego-self, attune to our Genuine Self, come into alignment with Spirit, see the Sacred in each person we meet, gain wisdom and rise in consciousness.